



Between information seeking and sharing – use of social media in a young learner context

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Publication date:
2013

Document version
Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (APA):
Hyldegård, J. S. (2013). *Between information seeking and sharing – use of social media in a young learner context*.

Information seeking activities and social media

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Abstract

Many web tutorials have been developed with the aim of guiding students' information seeking, research and writing behavior, hence providing a platform for building information literacy (IL) knowledge and skills - in addition to other IL activities. They are often stand-alone offline tools offered through the library. Standard software exists for building interactive web 2.0 tutorials, e.g. LibGuide from Springshare, but only minor attention is generally paid to social media and internet searching by the developers. Having said that, we know from recent research that use of social media for course work is increasing (e.g. Educause Center for Applied Research, 2011). We also know, however, that the positive myths about the digital natives seem to be overrated (Connaway & Dickey, 2010; Connaway & White, 2012). A growing need exists for continuing educational research and inquiry into the dynamic nature of information behavior of young people and their information and digital literacy skills (e.g. Large, 2006; Limberg, Sundin & Talja, 2012; Sundin & Francke, 2009).

This paper addresses the information seeking behavior among secondary school pupils (between 15 and 20 years old) and in particular the use of social media in a professional study context. The research focus is on secondary school pupils' use of social media as information source, e.g.: what activities are associated with social media as information source? What are the motivations and constraints for using social media as information source? How is use of social media integrated in a study context? And what are the characteristics of digital information behavior across type of learner/user and educational level? In addition to these questions the paper will also address the methods and approaches that have been applied in recent research projects on social media and information seeking.

The paper is based on a systematic review of a selected number of core LIS journals including results from recent research projects on students' and young peoples' information behavior (e.g. Barlett & Miller, 2011; Connaway & Dickey, 2010; Connaway & White, 2012; Hyldegård, 2010; Hyldegård et al., 2011). Information behavior is here defined as "...those activities a person may engage in when identifying his or her own needs for information, searching such information in any way and using or transferring that information" (Wilson, 1999, p. 249). With regard to social media many definitions exist that will be further discussed. According to Oxford Dictionaries, for example, it refers to "websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking" (Oxford University Press, 2013). The theoretical framework presented by Connaway & White (2012) dividing users and learners into digital residents or visitors is used to characterize secondary school pupils' digital information behavior and use of social media. The study will include cognitive, physical, affective and social aspects of secondary school pupils' use of social media in a study context.

The aim of the paper is twofold; to further inform librarians and teachers in design and IL, and to guide the design of a larger study in 2013 on social media in a secondary school context.

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Keywords: *information literacy, social media, information seeking behavior, secondary school pupils.*